

RUF Bible Study – Dating Sex and Marriage  
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Genesis 2 and 3

Last summer I had to make several trips up to Penn Square Mall in Oklahoma City to get some work done on my Macbook computers. Going to the MacStore is a great experience. Everyone is super nice, super hip, super cool and you want to buy stuff. Working in the MacStore must be pretty amazing. You don't really have to do much. The store is crowded. People flock in there. They want to buy the product. You may have to answer a few questions, but then you just ring them up. Sold. I walked out pretty happy with my service.

This is in rather extreme contrast to one of the other businesses in the same mall. Right outside the MacStore is a kiosk where you can buy wigs. I suppose other hair care products, but mostly I saw wigs. Really? Are people buying a lot of wigs? I don't think they are. The woman who was running the kiosk must not think so either because her tactic to get people even to notice her stand was to approach people walking by with, "Excuse me, may I say something?" I thought that was so sad and pathetic, her asking people if she could say something, anything, please!

I'm not sure if discussing dating, sex and marriage is more akin to the Apple store or the wig kiosk. On the one hand, this is the topic you all are thinking about. It sells itself. You walk in and look around. You want to buy, to talk. So I wear my cool orange tshirt and answer questions, helping you navigate the options.

On the other hand, I'm a pastor. So I feel like I also walk around with, "Excuse me, can I say something!" I often feel that no one is listening, no one cares, and God's word is passed by, ignored and dismissed.

In this lesson, we're going to look at the origins of the relationship and the conflict. We'll go back to the beginning.

***Genesis 2, The First Marriage – Leave, Weave and Cleave***

I want to spend a few lessons on marriage, because I think that will help set the stage for where we need to be looking at, shooting towards and have our sights set on. This will hopefully then spill over into helping us better understand dating, friendship and our other relationships. I also want to do this because I think almost every one of you will get married at some point in your life. Maybe one out of 200 won't (now you're thinking, Is that me?!), but 199 of you will. So this is pertinent stuff. Some of you may get married when you're 35; others of you within the next year (crazy but true). Some of you already know the person you will eventually marry (look around), but some of your future spouses may be in grade school (erg...uh... but still true). Regardless, this is important stuff for you to be thinking about.

Back to the beginning of the Bible. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. That's Genesis 1:1. God created. Before creation, God was a Trinitarian, relational God. He made everything and all things come from his hand. On the last day of his work, he created the pinnacle of it all – people. He created Adam. God said that all he had created was good, very good. He was satisfied with what he had done.

So Adam ruled in the garden. Adam was doing his thing. He named animals. He talked with God. They hung out. This is all in Genesis 2.

But there was a problem. Creation was not yet complete. God said, "It is not good for man to be alone." Something in God's creation was not good. Perhaps Adam realized it already as he kept on seeing male and female animals, but *he* didn't have a corresponding friend. It seems likely Adam would have longed for this, but we know God wanted to fix this problem.

God made a woman. He made a "helper fit for him." An *Ezer Kenegdo*. He made someone who could help him because she was stronger and more able than he is in many areas. That's what helpers do. They're only able to help if they are more qualified and more competent. And she fit with him. He fit with her. They connected. They matched.

God brought this woman to this man out of the miracle of creation. The Bible doesn't really give much detail about how God created anything else. We don't know how he made sea horses or venus fly traps or mushrooms. But for both the man and the woman, the narrative slows down and focuses on how special these two were. They and only they were created in the image of God.

God brought her to Adam. In my mind (and this isn't Scripture), I don't think this was a Tada! beauty pageant unveiling. I don't picture Eve stepping out naked from behind a tree. I imagine God brought her to him while he was still sleeping. So when Adam wakes up, he wakes up to a woman nuzzling next to him. I'll bet her head was tucked into his neck on his chest and one of her legs draped over him. Her breasts pressed against his side. And I think he knew what to do next!

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Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: By Doug Serven, © Doug Serven, 2008, website: [www.ouruf.org](http://www.ouruf.org). For this series, I used several books as background reading and listened to sermons by as many people as I can find, especially Tim Keller, Les Newsom, Richard Vise, Jeff Ferguson and Jean Larroux. The reader should assume that none of the ideas expressed are original to me.

Adam breaks into the first true poetry of the Bible: *This is at last bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman for she was taken out of man!* (Genesis 2:23)

Adam is truly excited. He doesn't yawn. He isn't bored with her. He is astounded and amazed at how awesomely amazing she is.

Then we read some instruction for us, a vision and a paradigm for us: *Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.* (Genesis 2:24)

There is so much to say here, but let's briefly look at what this means about marriage.

### *Leaving*

A new couple is to leave their parents and their family in order to form a new unit, a new family. Now, it's important to realize that in the Ancient Near Eastern cultures, you would not move away when you got married. In fact, you would live in the same house as your immediate and extended families. So it wasn't really a distance or geographical issue. It's more like you communicate and they acknowledge that you have a key to your room. You can lock in and lock out the family and be your own family in your marriage. You're saying *this* relationship has the priority in my life.

What we're doing when we get married is we're building some boundaries. We're marking territory to say this is where this goes and that is where that goes, and this relationship entails this and that. We're making boundaries, and we're making covenants. These boundaries foster love and trust for the other person. "The boundaries mark off space not to cut off contact with others but to protect the young trust that is beginning to take root."<sup>2</sup>

This isn't a demanded thing from the other person. It's not like a barbed wire fence or the Berlin wall with snipers on all sides shooting people who try to get out. Think of a rock or wooden fence on 40 acres of land. There is room to roam, but you know where the property line is. "In almost all healthy relationships, the design of boundaries always includes a passageway – a doorway or a wall or a ladder to comfortably climb over the wall."<sup>3</sup>

Our spouse becomes our best friend. Not your mom. Not your buddies. You are now wrapped up in *your* (your plural, the two of you) story. Your parents cannot control you any more. You do not honor them with obedience – that is reserved for your spouse. You honor your parents by thanking them for their place in your life and communicating with them on a new, friendship level. This doesn't mean we avoid honesty or conflict at all costs. "To honor is to acknowledge with gratitude the gift of life we have been given through our parents. It is to name with joy who we have become due to their failures and glory."<sup>4</sup>

You have to leave everything behind in order to have a new place of trust. Nothing can compete with your spouse for your affections. You need to leave old relationships behind. You must leave old abuses behind. You have to leave pornography behind. You have to say no to the invitations and demands of the outside world. You have to be willing to give up anything for the sake of your marriage, anything that might harm your love. That may be your fear, your addictions, your abuse, your baggage, your bad habits.

You will be leaving the power these things have – and anything has – over you. You will be leaving them in order to have a new, deep, intimate relationship with your husband or your wife. There must be no other gods in your life besides God. You must acknowledge and give up the idols you have, some which you didn't even know.

Let me say something very important here: You do this together over time. You cannot fix yourself or solve yourself before you get married and then be good to go. It's so tempting to hear that. Get your act together and then get married. No. You will be doing these things together, and actually your trust will go as you work through the violation of these boundaries. Some of them are very clear – no sex outside of marriage. Breaking that boundary is huge and breaks down trust in a huge way. But what about talking to your mom every day with the intimate details of your life and heart? That seems like a boundary that needs to be talked about. What about your past of pornography and how that crops up in your heart? You have to name these things. You have to talk about them and ask for forgiveness when and as the boundaries are discovered and violated. You commit to each other to discuss them, to talk about them and to love each other.

I can be late to things. I don't want to be late. My wife trusts me more when I say my word can be trusted, that I will be home when I say I will be, and that I will call if I am delayed for some reason. And that when I break this word, I will ask for her forgiveness and not blame circumstances or something else.

When we're leaving, we're covenanting. We're vowing. You're saying:

*I Andrew, take you, Mary Rachel, to be my wedded wife. And I do promise before God, and these witnesses, that I will be true to you, forsaking all others, keeping myself only for you, from this day forward, to have and to hold, to love and to cherish, to honor and protect, in the midst of all God brings to us, so long as we both shall live.*

Leaving in some sense starts when you're dating. It takes a huge leap when you get married. You leave. You make these boundaries. But in another sense, it also takes a lifetime. We set up boundaries, and we make commitments, but the commitment is to discovering and discussing the boundaries we haven't yet known about or discovered. The forgiving of the

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<sup>2</sup> *The Intimate Mystery*, Allender and Longman, 39 – much of this is from this book

<sup>3</sup> *The Intimate Mystery*, 40

<sup>4</sup> *The Intimate Mystery*, Allender and Longman, 38

breaking of them. To name and transform the past. To embrace what has made us who we are. So talk about and embrace how God has been working in our lives, even when it is confusing and difficult. “Leaving is intended to put us on a path that takes us from comfort and control to the uncertainty of God’s calling. We leave our parents so we can grow in trust of God. We leave to follow the dream of meeting God.”<sup>5</sup>

I could say so much more about leaving, but we have to move on.

### *Weaving*

In the book *The Intimate Marriage*, the chapter on weaving starts off this way: “A marriage is only as good as a couple’s ability to fight. A husband and wife who fail to fight are not alive or honest.”<sup>6</sup>

If you want to have a good marriage, you cannot seek at all costs to avoid conflict or just be pleasant or to do everything your spouse wants.

You will sin. There will be hurt and division. There will be misunderstanding. You are two different people. Not only that you are a man and a woman – these are not the same thing! You view the world differently. You communicate differently. You will have conflict. So you must have talking and forgiveness. These are essential to marriage. Weaving our lives together is about how we communicate with each other. We can’t just set up boundaries. We have to talk about life within and outside of these boundaries. We weave our lives together as we do that, as we communicate.

“God loves words. His own Son is named Word. He spoke the world into existence through a word. And in due season he will speak Satan out of existence: one single word will fell him. Before Adam and Eve mucked up the world, God used to meet with them at the end of the day to talk. Apparently he enjoyed sitting with them, drinking a fine glass of wine, slicing a hunk of cheese to spread over a piece of thick, chewy bread. He wanted to hear from them firsthand what they had experienced. He already knew, since he was omniscient, but knowing is not the same as being in conversation.”<sup>7</sup>

Much of what follows comes from the book *The Intimate Marriage* which is a great book.

God loves to talk and listen. When God talks to Adam after the fall, then he is inviting him into a conversation, even just stating the obvious and what he already knows. Good conversation is open-ended and curious. It is not a debate, nor is it mere information giving. It’s a dialogue. It refuses to hide or accuse. There is freedom in ideas and thoughts.

Good conversation honors differences. We so often get frustrated when someone doesn’t see the world from our point of view. Instead we should be glad for a different view or else we’d be trapped in only our view. We appreciate the differences between feelings and relationships and processes and solutions.

In his book, *Blink*, Malcolm Gladwell talks about how social scientists can predict if a couple will get divorced or stay married with surprising accuracy. They have a couple sit in a “love lab” which is just a room with cameras and microphones. They record them for 15 minutes where they really talk about anything they want to talk about. That’s it.

So what is the biggest predictor of divorce? The presence of and degree of contempt. When they start to spot any sort of contempt in a gesture, look, tone or conversation, then the marriage will most likely end in divorce.

Honor esteems the other person without putting him or her down. Good conversation presumes the other person has something good and important to say that is different and good. We humble ourselves to listen to that conversation.

What about bad talk? Bad talk hides. Some couples just simply refuse to explore reality. They hate conflict for one reason or another and they choose not to walk into the places where they know conflict will occur. Bad talk fails to name its bias and its motive to win. We hide what we feel or what we want. We blame and distort what the other person wants. This is dismissing the other with contempt. It’s belittling. It’s being big, powerful and in control. It accuses. An accusation is not an invitation or exploration. It’s an assault intended to humiliate and disempower.

Well then how do we weave? We have to lovingly explore our hearts together. We have to be honest, even when we’re scared to. We have to ask for forgiveness when we sin. Not just “I’m sorry” or even worse, “I’m sorry you feel that way,” but “I own up to my sin and brokenness. Will you please forgive me.” The other person needs to, has to say “I forgive you.”

We must remember we’re on the same team. We are not enemies. Julie and I will often say when we’re fighting, “We’re on the same team” or a question, “We’re on the same team, right?” This reminds us that God is on our team, and it’s really the three of us in this together. There is the presence of God with us.

When trust has been broken, or boundaries have been crossed or issues come up, then there needs to be a willingness to get help. Seeking help and getting accountability bring trust as the other person sees action and not just contrition.

Redeeming talk confesses God’s presence, my failure, your hurt and our desire for the mystery of intimate truth to bring us to a new union. Redeeming talk owns our failure and then asks for favor, for grace. It owns the status of being undeserving, needy and broken. It enters the pain of the harm. It walks through the brokenness of the other without hiding,

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<sup>5</sup> *The Intimate Mystery*, 54

<sup>6</sup> 57

<sup>7</sup> *The Intimate Mystery*, 58

blaming or distorting. And it must comprehend what only the eyes of God can provide: a perspective on the harm that doesn't lose hope.<sup>8</sup>

This type of listening takes time. It's so easy just to neglect this time, or to go off in your own world without talking or connecting. It takes exclusion. You can't do this in the midst of the craziness. You have to be alone, even if for just 15 minutes in the bedroom, or on a walk or in the office with the door closed or washing dishes together. It takes reflection. You're not a secretary reporting a daily schedule of activities. You're involved in a real conversation.

This type of conversation involves telling your story, and hearing and entering the other person's story. Your past story of what has shaped you and your future story of hopes and dreams together in the short and long term. These are your desires together. This type of conversation and weaving involves risk. It's never exactly safe to talk about past lovers or present pornography or to hear of past lovers or present pornography. It's just easier not to talk about it or not to hear it. But that isn't risk and that isn't real.

Julie and I have been trying to talk more deeply, more regularly and more intimately about how we're doing and what our stories and dreams are. We've been connecting at deeper level than ever before and that is such a good, sweet thing. We have the capacity to hurt each other more than ever, so it's a big risk to do this. As we grow closer we taste our greatest disappointment and our sweetest fulfillment. That arouses our souls for heaven, it gives us pleasures of heaven. It gives us union and points us to so much more.

### *Cleaving*

The third aspect of the first marriage is cleaving. *They will become one flesh. And they were naked and not ashamed.*

As we – and *after* we – create boundaries, especially the covenant, vowing boundary of marriage, and as we weave our lives together with talking and listening, we are able to, allowed to, encouraged to, and actually have to come together in a physical way.

It's interesting to note how all these come together. There is an ethical and metaphysical vowing. We stand up and say words our loud in front of others and in front of God. That's how we get married. Through talking. There is the relational talking of weaving, as we sit side by side and face to face and use words to communicate who we really are and what we're really thinking. And there is the physical intimacy of sex. As we are now able to take our clothes off, be fully naked and vulnerable in the context of trust and words, we touch each other. We sacrifice for each other. We pleasure each other. We take pleasure in the other person. We desire each other. We complete each other. We are in each other. We are unified.

The two become one. Different. Complementary. Working together. There is a glory here in sex. It touches glory.

I'm going to leave off talking about this, since we'll be looking at sex itself later. Suffice it to say, sex is important in the Bible. God loves sex and evil hates sex.

### ***Genesis 3 – Why Everything Is So Messed Up***

Okay, so I think Genesis 2 presents a pretty good picture of relationships. We have Adam and Eve together, married, sexual, spiritual, relational and they're walking with God every day and doing their jobs as tending and caring for the earth.

But you and I know that's not where we're living life, are we?

Today in the paper, there is a headline: **Accused rapist still at large**. The story starts: "The man wanted in connection with the rape of an 11-year-old girl five weeks ago at a wedding anniversary celebration is a high-risk registered sex offender and illegal immigrant, Texas and Oklahoma officials say."<sup>9</sup>

There was also a story about a man who faces federal indictment of forcing minor girls and adult women into prostitution. One girl testified that he had abducted her from her Kansas and taken her to Houston where he forced her to work for him as a prostitute.

Last week there were three stories all on the same page. A former 28-year-old youth pastor in Oklahoma faces ten counts of "lewd molestation" with a 15-year-old girl. The story says he began to tell her he loved her when she was in the seventh grade.

A former Millwood teacher has been arrested on a complaint of lewd acts with a child. A 50-year-old had sent this text to a 15-year-old: I can't quit thinking bout kissing u and hopin for the chance to do it again."

And this one: "A hearing-impaired former University of Oklahoma football player faces felony child molestation and pornography charges and was in Cleveland County jail in lieu of \$5000 bail Wednesday."

There are stories in the paper like this every single day. In Oklahoma. What would the stories be like in India or the Philippines or other countries? Horrifying.

And what about the stories that don't make the papers. Your stories. My stories.

I remember the first time I saw pornography. I was thirteen and on a Boy Scout trip. Some of the older guys were in a tent, and I went in and they had a on of magazines. I saw pornography, and I liked it, and I was damaged, hurt, broken and intrigued.

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<sup>8</sup> all from page 65

<sup>9</sup> Daily Oklahoman, Local/State section, Sept 2, 2009

I remember my first real kiss. It was on a truth or dare to kiss for a minute and after about 20 seconds, she gave me some tongue, and I was surprised and I liked it. And sin crept closer.

I remember the first girl to show me her breasts. It was in the back seat of a car, and I don't know why she did it, but it was exciting and forbidden and I liked it. And evil was present, taking a place in my heart.

I remember the first girl I saw naked. She changed in front of me, all the way, and I knew I wasn't supposed to see or be there but I liked it. And I was hurt, and Satan crouched at my door.

I remember first wet dream, first masturbation attempt, first time to sneak downstairs to watch Cinemax late at night, first time to look at pornography on the internet, first time to go into a strip club. I remember my first time to have intercourse, which was with Julie on my wedding night, the only thing in this list which was right, true and good.

I am not a whole sexual person. I have a story of tremendous brokenness, confusion and heartache. It wouldn't be accurate to say I hated those things. I loved them. I was created by God to feel them. That's why it was and is so confusing. I am ashamed and guilty, and I want to hide away those parts of my life and story, never to acknowledge or admit them. If I do spend time there, I am often mad at God for allowing those things to happen to me, or I act like those things didn't affect me somehow, that I'm a survivor, strong enough not to be damaged. Much of this works itself out in the disfunction of my current sex life, my current sexual identity as a husband to Julie.

I am working on telling my story to Julie and also to others as is appropriate.

None of us have escaped sexual brokenness to this point. If you are living in this society, this culture, then you are bombarded with sexual images that have been previously considered pornography. They're commonplace now. It won't do to just say you ignore them. In fact, they are subconscious.

Some of you have stories like mine. You're "good kids" who know deep in your heart you have shameful treasures. You may technically be virgins, but you know it isn't really true, and you hide it away.

Others of you have more brokenness and regrets. You're also ashamed. Despite what your college and culture tell you, you know it wasn't supposed to be like this. As the line goes in *Unhooked*, "You can't put a condom on your heart." Amidst telling yourself that blow jobs and hook ups are no big deal, your heart is actually aching for more.

What is your story? The stories of sexual brokenness are simply overwhelming. We all have them. All of us. You are not alone. The worst thing you can do is to remain silent and think you're the only one.

Sin is real. It is a beast. Satan is real. He seeks to devour and destroy. Genesis 3 shows us and tells us how we got here. Adam and Eve decided they knew better than God, that they would believe the lie instead of the truth and they would be their own masters of their own fates. They listened to the Deceiver and they were deceived. This plunged us into ruin and destruction, disaster. This affected the very core of who we are. This corrupted all of us, and all our relationships. It changed the way people view and relate to God, each other and even themselves.

I saw a bumper sticker recently that said, "Hate is a learned behavior." Ha. I don't think so. My kids learned how to disobey, hate and hurt each other instinctively. I didn't have to teach them how to be mean to each other.

When Adam and Eve sinned, they saw each other differently. They covered themselves. The openness was gone. The freedom was gone. They blamed each other for what happened. Trust was broken. Love evaporated. They were enemies.

When they sinned, they hid from God. They didn't want relationship with him. They were afraid of him.

This is why our relationships have so much trouble. Why we're reading stories like these in the paper. Why my story is so deeply hurtful and hidden. Why your roommates drive you crazy. Why you get so upset when living arrangements don't work out. Why his words hurt so much. Why her cold shoulder cuts you to the core. Why you protect yourself instead of give yourself in love and openness.

Sin is real, folks. If you don't know that you don't understand reality. You won't and can't make it in relationships.

### ***So What Hope Do We Have?***

Wow. We are left with a pretty bleak picture then. We are alienated. We want to rule over people. We destroy others. We have idols in our lives that keep us from God and others. Because of other people, we are hurt, wounded and left as victims of their power and manipulation. We use good things in wrong and evil ways. Our own hearts are this way.

Here's our hope: It's found in Genesis 3. The first part of hope doesn't actually sound very hopeful. Genesis 3 tells us that sin is real and that God judges sin. God takes sin, rebellion, wickedness, injustice, abuse and all other forms and descriptions of sin very seriously. They will be and are judged. They are dealt with. They will be made right. Sin will be punished.

You want this. You would be very upset and frustrated if you didn't actually believe the wrongs will be made right some day. And God will set everything right.

So he judges the man and the woman. He says there are consequences of sin and spells them out. You should look at those and try to tease out how they affect our relationships for they surely do.

Before these curses and judgments on people, God also speaks to the snake, to Satan, the Deceiver.

*14 The Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. 15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."*

This is amazing and this is the gospel. This is your hope. God saying that there will be someone who will come and make things right. The word “offspring” is really “seed.” It’s a person, a singular person who is going to come. We are talking about Jesus, God’s son, God’s seed, God’s offspring.

Satan will bruise his heel. I’m sure you’ve had an ankle sprain or twisted ankle. They hurt. They bruise. But they’re okay.

Jesus will bruise his head. Other translations make it a little more graphic. He will crush your head. He will wound your head or strike your head. There’s a big difference between an ankle biter and a massive head wound. One will have your wrapped in gauze, but the other will land you in the ER hooked up to monitors and in critical condition.

Satan bit at Jesus’ heels. But Jesus has and will crush Satan like a paper cup. He’ll be beheaded, a final and decisive blow to all evil.

That is your hope. That is the gospel.

Your marriage won’t save you. Leaving, weaving and cleaving won’t actually “work.” Even if you do those things, and I hope you will, they will leave you wanting more. They will point you to heaven, but not get you there. That has to be with Jesus.

I think Genesis 2 is talking about the first marriage, but it’s also talking about the gospel too. You will be joined with someone who is like you and not like you. So close as to be really nearly 100% similar, but so different as to be nearly 100% different. You are meant to be exclusive to this person, giving yourself and all of yourself only to that relationship, above all others. This person comes to you. God brings this person to you even when you don’t think you needed it at the time. He provides for you and is near to you in bringing this person, sent from him to you. You become unified with this person. You are one. You indwell in him and he in you.

Is that talking about marriage or about the gospel of union with Christ? Yes. Both.

Do you see the picture? Do you see the gospel for you and how marriage points you to the gospel itself?